TOWN OF ROCKY HILL FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING OF MAY 14, 2014

Present: Chairwoman Cathy Vargas and Councilor Bill MacDonald. Also present were

John Mehr (Finance Director), Barbara Gilbert (Town Manager), Mona McKim (Treasurer), Elaine McKim (Tax Collector), Glenn Parent (Highway Supt./ Recycling Coordinator) (Entered at 4:37 p.m.) and Christa and Sophie Mariner

(Residents of R.H.).

Absent: Councilor Guy Drapeau.

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas called the May 14, 2014 meeting of the Finance Committee to order at 4:32 p.m. in the Council Chambers, Town Hall, 761 Old Main Street, Rocky Hill, CT.

I. ACTION – APPROVAL OF MINUTES – APRIL 16, 2014 MEETING

Councilor Bill MacDonald made a motion to approve the Minutes of the April 16, 2014 meeting of the Finance Committee. The motion was seconded by Chairwoman Cathy Vargas and adopted by those present. (Councilor Guy Drapeau was absent.)

II. ACTION – APPROVAL OF WORKING NOTES – APRIL 16, 2014 MEETING

Councilor Bill MacDonald made a motion to approve the Working Notes of the April 16, 2014 meeting of the Finance Committee. The motion was seconded by Chairwoman Cathy Vargas and adopted by those present. (Councilor Guy Drapeau was absent.)

III. DISCUSSION - PROPERTY TAX COLLECTION - TAX COLLECTOR

Mona McKim said she would start the discussion on this. She told this Committee that she thought they had the write-up on this and this was the Tax Collector's Policy, the actions that were taken, as well as some attachments. One of the attachments was the summary and she said that she wanted to make a couple of comments on that. This summarized the yearly delinquents for real estate, personal property and motor vehicles. She said that she had worked with Elaine McKim on this. Mona McKim said that they were trying to show that the total amount for the delinquents was \$4,979,000 but there were also some items in this that they were trying to exclude to give them a feel of those items that aren't easily collectible. She said these were listed on the bottom of the summary (i.e. the bankruptcy with Ames and some properties that the Town was doing foreclosure letters for, etc.). She gave more details about these. She then told the Committee that they were trying to give them a feel of those items that would be more of the possible collections and this total came to \$2,278,000. She mentioned that there were some additional footnotes at the bottom of the summary. She explained some more about those.

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked Councilor Bill MacDonald if he had any comments. Councilor Bill MacDonald said he appreciated the summary and it was very good. He thinks that this is something that will be helpful as they keep updating it. He asked where the Town will stand in line with regards to the collectability of the taxes for Ames if it gets purchased because it is going through an auction. Elaine McKim said that Ames is in bankruptcy and the Town has one claim against them right now. This is for \$180,000 and the Town Attorney is in Court for this. This will only be going to the principle if the Judge decides that the Town can get this. Elaine McKim said most likely everything else will be under Chapter 7 so the Town will not be able to get that money but she said they are trying. She explained that this is personal property and not real estate. Councilor Bill MacDonald thanked Elaine McKim.

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked Councilor Bill MacDonald if he had anything else and he didn't. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked Elaine McKim if she had anything else to add to what Mona McKim had said and she didn't. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas said thank you and she said this was very helpful.

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked Councilor Bill MacDonald if he thought they should get this on a quarterly basis and he told her that this was up to her. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked Elaine McKim if this would be a problem or if this should be twice per year or annually. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked how often this would be updated. Finance Director John Mehr said this would be something that would be good to run after tax collection season and he said this could be done in September, as well as in February. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas said that would be good. Finance Director John Mehr then referred to if there is any material collection, like for the Ames' settlement. Councilor Bill MacDonald told Finance Director John Mehr that he should have this updated then if that happens.

Finance Director John Mehr said they are thinking of pursuing tax sales. Elaine McKim said she would like to do those. She has been speaking to some other Towns to see what they have been doing. She also has picked a collection agency out and the Town Attorney is looking over the agreement. Elaine McKim said she got some references for that collection agency and they seem to be really good. She told the Committee that she could have someone come in to talk to them about tax sales. She said Adam Cohen is the Attorney for the Tax Collector's Association and he would be willing to speak to them. Councilor Bill MacDonald thinks this would be helpful.

Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said if Elaine McKim uses a collection agency that they will add their fee over and above taxes so taxpayer dollars won't be given away. The Town will get all of the taxes and interest that is due to them. The collection agency will collect a percentage that is over and above this. Councilor Bill MacDonald said this sounds great. Elaine McKim said the collection agency adds 15% and this is their fee. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas and Councilor Bill MacDonald said thank you.

IV. ACTION –SUSPENSE LIST- TAX COLLECTOR

Elaine McKim said she would like to add the 2010 Grand List to the suspense list. This has motor vehicles and personal property on it. She explained that she can still collect on this. Councilor Bill MacDonald asked Elaine McKim how she came up with these numbers and why

it is these accounts. Elaine McKim said this is for everything for motor vehicles and personal property that has been delinquent as of March 18, 2014. The majority of these are due to people being out of business or that they moved out of Town. These are also due to bankruptcies, deceased people or due to the fact that people are just not paying their taxes. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said this is also due to the IRS beating the Town to them.

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas confirmed that these will just be added to the bigger list and that these might be collected somehow. She explained a little more. Elaine McKim said that was correct. She said that she has a Marshal, who has gone out to collect, and some has been collected off of this list. She will have to put a special column on the side to let the auditors know that this money was collected.

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked Town Manager Barbara Gilbert about the motion for this and she asked if this would be going to the Town Council. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said if the motion passes then the agenda for the next Town Council meeting will be amended. She told this Committee that they could also have this put off until the June 2, 2014 meeting of the Town Council if they wanted to do that. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas said she didn't have a problem with this and she asked Councilor Bill MacDonald if he did. Councilor Bill MacDonald told Chairwoman Cathy Vargas that this could be whatever she wanted to do.

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked if she could have a motion. Councilor Bill MacDonald asked if this motion wouldn't be done at the Town Council meeting. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said this just needed to be moved to the Town Council for action.

Councilor Bill MacDonald made a motion to take the suspense list as accepted and forward it to the Town Council for its consideration. The motion was seconded by Chairwoman Cathy Vargas and adopted by those present. (Councilor Guy Drapeau was absent.) (Please see the First Attachment.)

Elaine McKim thanked Chairwoman Cathy Vargas and Councilor Bill MacDonald.

V. ACTION – RENEWING CONTRACT – CENTER CEMETERY SEXTON – FINANCE

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked Finance Director John Mehr if he wanted to review the contract for the Center Cemetery Sexton with this Committee. Finance Director John Mehr said approximately fifteen years ago, the Town consolidated all of the services that are needed to run Center Cemetery to the Sexton position. The Sexton checks to make sure that Center Cemetery is in good shape. He goes out to plot a cemetery plot for the funeral home when there is a funeral and he attends funerals to make sure that they run smoothly. He also advertises plots and tries to sell them to people who are interested in buying them. This job is seven days a week depending on when the funeral is. The Town has had great success with this Sexton and Finance Director John Mehr highly recommended that they continue with the Sexton for another three years. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert recommended that they also continue and she said the Town Manager is designee per the cemetery rules. She said that she and her predecessor really didn't have the time to go out with families, who are grieving, to find a cemetery plot. She

doesn't think that her successor will have the time either. She explained that the Sexton is paid out of the funds they receive and he also keeps track of when other cemeteries in this area raise their rates so that Rocky Hill is comparable but they are still respectful of the fact that this is a municipal cemetery. She said that they are going to have to officially raise the rates at one point in time because they have headstones at Center Cemetery that are aging so they are going to have to start looking at maintaining these before their history deteriorates. This isn't the economy right now to start doing this in but she said that hopefully there will be a way some day to have funds to have this put in place.

Town Manager Barbara Gilbert told the Committee that she thinks this method works now and she recommended that this be continued. The Sexton knows Center Cemetery more than anyone else does. There are small metal markers that delineate the graves that haven't been sold. The Sexton is very adept at finding the right grave for families at a time when they are having trouble making decisions.

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas referred to the contract for the Sexton and she asked if this is the same exact thing as it was the last time. Finance Director John Mehr said there are no changes and this is the same thing. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas confirmed that the decision for this is just made within this Committee. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said this rests with this Committee per Center Cemetery's rules.

Councilor Bill MacDonald made a motion to have the contract renewed for the Sexton for Center Cemetery. The motion was seconded by Chairwoman Cathy Vargas and adopted by those present. (Councilor Guy Drapeau was absent.)

BE IT RESOLVED that the Town Manager is authorized to enter into a contract with Ray Sweezy to continue being the Sexton for Center Cemetery. This contractual position is to be compensated as follows:

- 1) \$350.00 a month;
- 2) \$300.00 for each burial the sexton oversees at the cemetery;
- 3) \$85.00 for each cremation the sexton oversees at the cemetery;
- 4) and 5% sales commission for the sale of cemetery plots.

The contract shall start on July 1, 2014 and end on June 30, 2017. The sexton position will be paid out of the Center Cemetery Fund.

Report and Recommendation

Ray Sweezy has been the Center Cemetery sexton for the last fifteen years. The sexton's main duties include the selling of cemetery plots, the marking out of the plots for the burial, and overseeing the funeral service. The Town Manager and Finance Director recommend renewing the sexton contract with Ray Sweezy for another three (3) year term.

Finance Director John Mehr said thank you.

VI. UPDATE – BANS REFUNDING MAY 15, 2014 – FINANCE

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked Finance Director John Mehr if he wanted to give the Committee an update on the BANS. Finance Director John Mehr said he thinks they had the sale on May 1, 2014 and they had four bidders on their \$8,100,000, one hundred and fifty day BANS. He told the Committee that the sheet he provided to them had a net interest cost on it and they came in at .153% being the low bidder. This was Eastern Bank. The settlement date will be tomorrow and he said that Mona McKim will be tracking the money that will be coming in, as well as paying their existing BANS of \$4,100,000. Finance Director John Mehr said it is said sometimes that these types of bidders like larger offerings so that they can parcel these out better to the mutual funds and whoever is interested in buying them. He thinks sometimes they get a better rate, the bigger they get compared to when they have lower amounts.

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked Councilor Bill MacDonald if he had any questions. Councilor Bill MacDonald said this is a great rate and he told them that they did a great job on this. Finance Director John Mehr said the reason that they went up from \$4,100,000 to \$8,100,000 is because of the road referendum. The bridge will be done this summer hopefully and he thinks they are starting the roads right now. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas thanked Finance Director John Mehr very much.

VII. DISCUSSION - BANK BALANCES AND FEES - FINANCE

Finance Director John Mehr said he thinks that Councilor Guy Drapeau likes this item to be discussed. Finance Director John Mehr said that he remembers this Committee had discussed this and they said they wanted to see this on a quarterly basis but he didn't relay this to Mona McKim so he said that he wanted to share her work with all of them.

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas said that she knew they didn't have the bank balances for the Parks and Recreation Department on this at this time because of the budget things and she asked if this will all be in place for June 2014. Finance Director John Mehr said they will be working with Lisa Zerio (Director of Parks and Recreation & Custodial Staff) after the budget gets adopted on Monday in order to try to structure the Special Rec Account starting on July 1, 2014. They will have a recommendation of transferring funds into the nonrecurring account. He explained some more about this and then he said the Town Council can do whatever they want of course. He said the target date to have this proposed is for their June meeting. They are looking to having this Special Rec Account summarized into five major categories. These will be both from an expenditure point and from a revenue one. Lisa Zerio will continue to keep the detail on the various programs. Finance Director John Mehr said the key thing is that the Munis reports will be the accounting ones that the bank accounts will be reconciled to. He asked Mona McKim if he covered everything that she is planning on doing. Mona McKim said yes. She told Finance Director John Mehr that he did a good job. Mona McKim said instead of the long list of categories that she has fine-tuned this down to a group of five, which will be Family Activities, Seniors, Preschool, Youth Services and Other. The "Other" category will contain all of the scholarships and fundraising, etc. This will be tracked through the financial system. The Parks and Recreation Department can do something more fine-tuned that is program related on their own if they want to. All of the revenues will be coming straight through the Town's system and

they will do this by June 2014. She has a lot of this work together and they have been looking at balances. They will work with Lisa Zerio to see if any of these dollar amounts belong to specific programs, etc. before they start looking at what balances to take. Mona McKim said they are very close to being prepared.

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked Councilor Bill MacDonald if he had any questions. Councilor Bill MacDonald asked if the book of record will be the Munis accounts and Mona McKim said yes. Councilor Bill MacDonald said thanks.

VIII. UPDATE – STATE AID TO MUNICIPALITIES FOR 2013-14 BUDGET – FINANCE

Finance Director John Mehr said this was just an update on the State monies that the Town got in April 2014. They received everything that they were expecting from the school transportation funds to the Casino money, as well as their last payment of the ECS Grant. They are still waiting for one last payment on the Mashantucket Grant and they should be getting this next month.

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked Councilor Bill MacDonald if he had any questions. Councilor Bill MacDonald said he had a question that was somewhat related as to how this would refer to the budget for Fiscal Year 2014-15. He asked how they pared out compared to what they had in the budget versus what was finally pushed through their Capitol. Finance Director John Mehr said the State General Assembly's Appropriation Committee increased the PILOT money so he thinks the Town ended up getting \$932,000. Mona McKim said this was \$418,000 over what they had budgeted for this year. Councilor Bill MacDonald referred to the budget that they will be adopting on Monday and he asked if that will include a revenue source of \$932,000. Finance Director John Mehr said yes and he said this nets out over what they had anticipated getting which was around \$700,000 when they had done the budget. They increased their revenues from the State by approximately \$200,000. This will drop the mill rate down. Councilor Bill MacDonald said this will be one-tenth of a mill. Finance Director John Mehr said this will be one-tenth and a half of a mill. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert told the Committee to please keep in mind for Fiscal Year 2015-16 that it has been known to the communities that there will be drastic changes made to PILOT, etc. She had attended a meeting of CCM's (Connecticut Conference of Municipalities) Legislative Committee yesterday and they stressed that Fiscal Year 2015-16 will be a much different year. The Town will probably receive its aid very differently. There is even a consideration of having the State collecting all of the property taxes and then they will pay these back to the Town as they see fit. This will be based on how they feel Towns are being run. This is dangerous to her. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas said they will have to wait to see what will happen.

IX. MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT – APRIL 2014 - FINANCE

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked Councilor Bill MacDonald if he had any questions about this. Councilor Bill MacDonald asked if they are still operating under a freeze. He asked if they are allowing departments to proceed with purchasing items that they need (i.e. a computer, etc.) or if everything is still frozen. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said they are operating under a freeze unless something is needed. She said that the IT Department has been told what they need to

acquire in order to utilize this year's money to improve the system in order to move ahead. She mentioned that this is along with the IT Committee. The IT Department needs to move this through the IT Committee first though before they start acquiring things and making changes that work towards the newer system. The IT Department can encumber money if they have to. Councilor Bill MacDonald gave an example of the RHFD having a couple of computers in their budget that they haven't purchased yet. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said the RHFD can purchase these. Councilor Bill MacDonald confirmed that the RHFD can purchase these computers and Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said yes. Councilor Bill MacDonald asked to make sure that these Minutes (Working Notes) reflect that at this Committee's meeting that Town Manager Barbara Gilbert has indicated to the RHFD that if they have computers in their current budget that they will need to perform their function then they can purchase them by using the funds for Fiscal Year 2013-14. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said yes. Councilor Bill MacDonald said perfect. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said this is a budgeted item and the RHFD's budget is in line to most degree. They need these to operate and she said thank you.

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas referred to the page where the revenues were being referred to, as well as the Grand List for 2011 and 2012 and the number of accounts that are delinquent. She asked Elaine McKim if those are the same people for both of the years that were listed or if some of these are overlapping people from year to year. Elaine McKim said most likely that they are. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas said the numbers are very similar. She asked how long they let this compound before they "cut the cord". Elaine McKim referred to the real estate ones and she said that she puts liens on those the following April. After two or three years, she will send a letter out to the Town Attorney so that they can start doing foreclosures. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked if these accumulate for at least two to three years. Elaine McKim said yes.

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas referred to the year-end transfers and she asked if they will be getting those in June 2014. Finance Director John Mehr said that they will hopefully get the ones with regards to the moving around of the salary adjustments at the beginning of June 2014 and they will have the Capital Improvement transfers into nonrecurring and any other accounts at the end of June 2014. They will then get the transfers to balance the budgets off in the August/September 2014 timeframe. He said that one that should have gone out earlier was the transferring of money out of contingency to cover the salary adjustments and some other miscellaneous things but he said that he hasn't been able to do this yet. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas confirmed that this won't completely wipe out contingency and that this is just part of it. Finance Director John Mehr said again that this is for salary adjustments and some of the payouts on retirees. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas said thank you.

X. LEGAL BILLS – TOWN MANAGER/FINANCE

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked if it was correct that there were no legal bills. Finance Director John Mehr said that was correct because the Town didn't get them yet.

XI. UPDATE - USE OF OVERTIME – TOWN MANAGER

Town Manager Barbara Gilbert passed out a copy of the overtime report to the Councilors. This was through the end of April 2014. Overtime isn't being driven by weather as much so they are doing somewhat better but she said that this hasn't "healed itself". She told them that they are still not going to ever overcome the severe overages from this past winter.

Town Manage Barbara Gilbert told the Committee that they will be seeing overtime under Park Area Grounds next month. There was approximately six to seven hours of overtime and this was one hour per employee. There had been an incident where a razorblade had been found on the ground at one of their parks. Everyone was pulled from their jobs immediately and the men weren't able to go home until every single playground was swept. This is something that would have given a severe liability to this Town. She had called Mayor Henry Vasel when she had received the phone call about this and he was cognizant of this. Mayor Henry Vasel had agreed that they should proceed.

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked Councilor Bill MacDonald if he had any questions and he didn't. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas said thank you.

XII. OTHER

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas said this Committee doesn't have "Public Comment" on its agenda and she had a request from Christa Mariner, who wanted to speak at this meeting, so she asked her to come to the podium and state her address for the record. Christa Mariner, 58 Farms Village Road, R.H., thanked Chairwoman Cathy Vargas for allowing her to speak now. Christa Mariner asked Chairwoman Cathy Vargas if her Mother could pass out her correspondence to this Committee. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas said yes. (Please see the Second Attachment.) Christa Mariner read this aloud and in full at this time. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas thanked Christa Mariner.

Councilor Bill MacDonald said he would like to have Christa Mariner's correspondence shared with all of the Town Council on Monday at their meeting. Councilor Bill MacDonald thinks this is such an important item and topic. He said that any material that they receive from anyone in the public which relates to an item like this should be shared with the entire Town Council and not just the two members of this Committee who were present today.

Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said she could answer Christa Mariner's main question and she told this Committee that she could answer it in writing if they preferred or she could answer it right now. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas told Town Manager Barbara Gilbert that she could answer it now and then also answer it at Monday's Town Council meeting. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said the Town will lose all State grants if they don't have their Plan of Conservation and Development filed on time. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked if this would be by July 1, 2014. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said this would be by whatever deadline the State has given to them. The deadline of July 1, 2014 was to allow the State more time to adopt their Plan of Conservation and Development and she believes that they have adopted it finally. She said the deadline of July 1, 2014 may have been slipped back in this legislative session to

January 2015 but she isn't sure. Rocky Hill does need to do this though and all State funding is tied to the completing of the Plan of Conservation and Development in a timely manner. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked Town Manager Barbara Gilbert if she could find out about the July 1, 2014 date. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said she will find out about this tomorrow morning from CRCOG (Capitol Region Council of Governments) but she had asked this question and she was given the answer that they will lose all State funding and grants. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked Town Manager Barbara Gilbert to find this out and then she can include the answer in the Councilors' packets, along with this correspondence. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said she will put this in their amended packets and she will also get whatever Statute or whatever states that they would lose their funding. Chairwoman Cathy Vargas thanked Town Manager Barbara Gilbert very much.

Councilor Bill MacDonald asked for the record, what their total State funding is. Finance Director John Mehr thinks this is over \$5,000,000. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said this will be any STEAP (Small Town Economic Assistance Program) Grants. Councilor Bill MacDonald said this will also be any potential future grants. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said by grants that she isn't sure if the State means all funding in total or just grants. It was mentioned to her that this would be all State funding but she said that each category is considered a grant.

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas thanked them very much and she asked if there was anything else. Councilor Bill MacDonald asked if an update could be given to this Committee as to where the Town was with regards to setting the mill rate as far as the results of the Town Council meeting (on May 12, 2014) and what the number looks like today, as well as what the plan is to take this from this Committee's meeting to Monday's budget adoption. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said they had just finished meeting about the revenues and making revenue adjustments. They are crosschecking the approximate fifty motions that had been made at this past Monday evening's Town Council meeting to make sure they have every motion, as well as to make sure they are accurately reflecting what was done. Some of the motions had multiple steps. If they come in where they think they are then she said they will be at 29.7 mills. Councilor Bill MacDonald asked if this is taking into account the adjustments of revenue and the cuts that were approved at the Town Council meeting. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said this is right unless they missed something but she said they didn't think they had as of right now. The motion (for the adoption of the budget) will be on the Council table next Monday evening as this has traditionally been done. This is so that they make sure everything is accurate. She explained that the last thing they need to do is have the Town Council adopt something that is inaccurate because this would put the Town in a horrible position going forward for the next fiscal year. They have looked at all of the revenues. This includes the revenues from the State, as well as the revenues that the Town collects.

Councilor Bill MacDonald asked if they cut \$2,200,000, what the actual impact would be if they cut \$2,100,000 instead for example. He asked if they are leaving money on the table because they aren't within the tenth of a mill. He explained that \$197,000 is one-tenth of a mill and he gave an example of them cutting \$250,000. He said this then would mean that they have \$53,000 that is left on the table that will really have no impact at all to the mill rate or to the taxpayer. He told them that he would like this number if they had it now. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert asked Mona McKim if she had this number with her now. Mona McKim said to

bring this to the .7 that this had an excess of \$46,399 in revenue. Councilor Bill MacDonald said they haven't made any changes on adoption night for the budget historically because if there are then he would require finance to go back to rerun the numbers. The worst case is if they miscalculate and they are off by even one-tenth of a mill like it had happened years ago in this Town. There would be significant ramifications. Town Manager Barbara Gilbert said this had been off a whole mill years ago and it was awful. Councilor Bill MacDonald said thank you.

Chairwoman Cathy Vargas asked Councilor Bill MacDonald if he had anything else and he said no.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Bill MacDonald made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:07 p.m. The motion was seconded by Chairwoman Cathy Vargas and adopted by those present. (Councilor Guy Drapeau was absent.)

Respectfully submitted,

Jo-Anne Booth Recording Secretary